



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

## Understanding Online Audio-Visual Content: A European Initiative, Media Literacy and the User

Barber, S. (2012). Understanding Online Audio-Visual Content: A European Initiative, Media Literacy and the User. *Media Studies*, 3(6), 28-41. [http://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id\\_clanak\\_jezik=141828](http://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=141828)

**Published in:**  
Media Studies

**Document Version:**  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:**  
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

### **Publisher rights**

Copyright 2012 The Author

This is an open access article published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>), which permits use, distribution and reproduction for non-commercial purposes, provided the author and source are cited and new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

### **General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### **Take down policy**

The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact [openaccess@qub.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@qub.ac.uk).

# UNDERSTANDING ONLINE AUDIO-VISUAL CONTENT: A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE, MEDIA LITERACY AND THE USER

Sian Barber

IZVORNI ZNANSTVENI RAD / UDK 004.031.4:008, 316.77(086.8), 654.1(4):8 / PRIMLJENO: 11.07.2012.

**ABSTRACT** *Recent debates about media literacy and the internet have begun to acknowledge the importance of active user-engagement and interaction. It is not enough simply to access material online, but one must also be able to comment upon it and re-use it. Yet how do these new user expectations fit within digital initiatives which increase access to audio-visual-content but which prioritise access, preservation of archives and online research rather than active user-engagement? This article will address these issues of media literacy in relation to audio-visual content. It will consider how these issues are currently being addressed, focusing particularly on the high-profile European initiative EUscreen. EUscreen brings together 20 European television archives into a single searchable database of over 40,000 digital items. Yet creative re-use restrictions and copyright issues prevent users from re-working the material they find on the site. Instead of re-use, EUscreen offers access and detailed contextualisation of its collection of material. But if the emphasis for resources within an online environment no longer rests upon access but on user-engagement, what does EUscreen and similar sites have to offer to different users?*

## KEY WORDS

ARCHIVE, AUDIO-VISUAL SOURCES, CULTURAL HERITAGE, EUROPEAN TELEVISION MEDIA LITERACY

Author note

**Sian Barber** :: Royal Holloway, University of London, UK :: [Sian.barber@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.barber@rhul.ac.uk)

A 2011 report from the independent regulator for the UK communications industries (Ofcom), defined media literacy as "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts" (Ofcom, 2011). Yet when users and audiences are described as being 'media literate' what does this actually mean? Are user expectations changing and is the emphasis now upon engaging with material rather than simply accessing it? Do we have the same expectations of all users, or do we expect different levels of literacy, comprehension and expertise from different users?

Debates about media literacy and digital literacy are frequently focused on the user experience. Do the majority of people have access to the internet, can they find and use material online, can they create and contribute to online material? Engaging with online content no longer simply means accessing, reading or referencing, but also creating, adapting and sharing. The proliferation of social media applications has created a seismic shift in the way people engage with the material they access online, and this in turn has affected levels of media literacy. Simon Popple considers that as users become more proficient in using new media tools and finding new ways of engaging with online content, they become "technologically empowered" (2012: 321). Yet has the importance of user engagement obscured a fundamental point about understanding the material found online?

This article will explore how media literacy relates to audio-visual content found online and the impact that improving levels of media literacy has on online archives and websites. I will pay particular attention to the way in which media literacy, including aspects of understanding and engagement, fit within the scope and agenda of a recent high-profile European initiative, EUscreen, which offers access to over 40,000 items from European television archives. My involvement in the EUscreen project allows me a rare opportunity to reflect upon the nature of the project and the way in which the site engages with its users.

## PARTICIPATION NOT JUST WATCHING

Peter Godwin and Jo Parker have drawn attention to recent changes in the internet and suggest that in the last ten years it has become essentially "a place for collaboration, more personal and driven by us, the users" (2012: 3). Nowhere is user-driven collaboration more evident than on social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, but user engagement also proliferates on YouTube.

As the most popular and frequently used collection of moving image content on the web, YouTube occupies an important position for its users and also those who study media and digital communications. Lynn Spigel acknowledges that the site:

*Shows little concern for the original airdates or broadcast networks, and it's typically impossible to know the surrounding programme context in which TV clips originally aired... YouTube's clip culture is part of a process of popular memory in which the uses of the past are tied to present day concerns and conversations. (2011: 68-69)*

YouTube's concerns are less about what questions people are asking of its content and more about how they are responding and contributing to it. Spigel terms the YouTube approach 'collective archival bricolage' and suggests that presenting material in this way problematises traditional historical approaches which both desire and require context and historical specificity. This may be true, yet YouTube does not position itself as serving the research community: it exists to serve all internet users and emphasises user involvement and engagement. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green define YouTube as a "site of participatory culture" (2009: vii) and draw specific attention to the way in which the site "illustrates the increasingly complex relations among producers and consumers in the creation of meaning, value and agency" (2009: 14). Such active engagement has been identified as a crucial component of media literacy yet Burgess and Green suggest that media literacy is not something that individual users possess but is rather a process which is facilitated and encouraged by a system that both enables and shapes participation – a system which exists on a site such as YouTube.

But it could be argued that the YouTube community are unusual in their active and highly-visible engagement and participation. It is easy to see user engagement with the material on the site in the comments and observations posted underneath the videos. Other sites do not have the space or opportunity for users to engage with the material in such a direct way and engagement may not be their principal objective. For sites created as part of digitisation or academic initiatives such as the European Film Gateway, EUscreen or its predecessor Video Active, the imperative is access rather than engagement.

With such sites, user engagement is encouraged but contextualisation of the material for users is seen to be far more desirable. The need to contextualise has emerged amidst growing concerns from academics, teachers and researchers about the free and easy availability of online material. While this profusion of material unquestionably offers great riches, using it can be far from straightforward. Concerns about contextualisation are also paramount for organisations who contribute to collections of online material. It is difficult to access, share or reuse any online archive material without running into issues of copyright and ownership and it is within this modern context of legal restrictions, limited access, and prohibited uses of material which all collections of audio visual material must be considered. These online collections all exist for very specific reasons and these reasons – be they curatorial, economic or social – must be duly acknowledged. As Craig Robertson points out, "all historians should be aware of the processes through which archives create 'records' through collection and classification but media historians need to be particularly cautious" (2011: 4). To take Robertson's point further, it is not simply media historians who need to be cautious, but rather anyone who accesses anything online – a user group which goes far beyond the parameters of any academic discipline or community.

In a media literate world and when accessing material online, all users should recognise what questions to ask of the material, the host site, the contributor, and the organisation which created and produced it. As Julia Noordegraaf points out:

*Once out of the context of the archive with its systematically compiled catalogue of information, contextualised materials and tacit knowledge on the origins and meaning of the object, the meaning of archive holdings becomes open to various interpretations depending on the specific use made of it and the type of information that accompanies it. (2010: 3)*

In this way information accessed online must be subject to higher levels of rigorous of investigation than conventional, text based offline sources. Academic writing and pedagogy is gradually acknowledging that understanding a wider variety of sources, including those found online, is a crucial aspect of contemporary research and scholarship (Barber and Penniston-Bird, 2009). But again, this is an issue which extends beyond the world of academia. As more and more material becomes available online and is removed further from the control of archivists, librarians, historians or curators, the need for higher levels of general media literacy and understanding become paramount. Accessing this material is no longer the issue, but rather recognising its possibilities and its limitations. While users may be media literate they may have limited understanding about the context of the material they find and use. They may not recognise issues of selectivity, curation, and contextualisation which are essential to fully understand online resources. Yet Simon Pople suggests that this is changing, observing that "as audiences become more attuned to the potential of exploring and engaging with digital resources, they are also becoming more sophisticated in their use of materials and questioning of 'institutional' interpretative strategies and restrictions based on access, copyright and content" (2011: 321).

Andreas Fickers remains unconvinced arguing that "it seems as though ritualised practices of critical source analysis are neglected when dealing with audiovisual sources from the web" (2012), while Robertson considers that "media and methods of inquiry are changing; the effects this is having on historical research and writing is still in the process of being fully grasped" (2011: 4). But bringing users with new and highly developed levels of media literacy together with online resources does not mean the end of academic rigour, but rather the emergence of a different set of challenges for both academics and internet users.

## PRESERVATION, ACCESS AND USE

In removing the barriers of access, online resources are now (in theory) available to all. But just as the medium of the Internet is different from the book, the museum or an academic journal, users of online moving image material may not be conversant with standard historical methods and critical sourcework. Similarly it could also be the case that many who study academic history are not versed in the historiographical practices necessary for evaluating online material and unfamiliar with the importance of new media forms to academic disciplines. These two disparate disciplines – history and media studies – need to find common ground and recognise the validity of each other's approaches. Perhaps the bigger issue here is that, as both Fickers and Robertson identify, the discipline of history does not adequately address online audio visual sources. This inadequacy draws attention to the need for new methodologies with a focus on media literacy and

comprehension in order to deliver what Fickers terms a 'new digital historicism'. This would better equip users, and in particular students and young scholars, with the skills necessary to interpret an increasing range of digital and freely available moving image content.

Although most important for scholars and researchers seeking to use audio-visual material in their academic work, these issues of understanding and interpretation apply to all users. For example, one of the key problems when approaching online sources is the issue of abstraction. Unlike sources located and positioned securely within a journal, newspaper or a carefully catalogued archive, material found online frequently includes little contextualising information. As well as asking basic questions of the material itself, what is it, who made it, why was it made and so forth, anyone accessing online material should also be asking who has selected the material, how is it presented and structured, what narratives are presented, what is included alongside the online material, is it part of a collection, what has been included and what has been left out, and how is the material intended to be used?

Users should also ask questions about the provenance of the material. Is it original material produced by fans, a music video posted by a new band or is the material part of the archive holdings of a broadcaster, museum or library? Or is it a mash-up of earlier items? Do we know who curated or selected this material and what was their motivation?

These are the kind of interrogatory questions which need to be levelled at online material – much in the same way that we evaluate written and published sources for their authenticity, usefulness and reliability. Such questions encourage users to understand what they see online and critically engage with material rather than simply accept it unquestioningly. Such an approach also recognises the difference between simply accessing and viewing material and fully understanding it.

It is also important to consider where online content has come from, who has provided it and what their objective is in making it available. Unlike much of the amateur-produced content on YouTube which is principally intended to be seen, a great deal of digitisation work is carried out by libraries and archives with a view to preservation and not to increase access. Within many television archives, the archives are repositories of material for broadcasters and journalists. In this way they are 'working archives'. They do not exist for academic or research purposes and it is misleading to consider them in this way, a point Paddy Scannell has made in relation to his work at the BBC television archives (2011: 42).

At the 2011 Media and History conference in Copenhagen, Thomas Christensen from the Danish Film Institute developed this point when he drew attention to the Institute's current programme of digitisation and highlighted the impact such processes have upon the original collections. For example the creation of 'new' material extracted from the original material, thereby effectively removing the need for keeping the original material and for continuing to allow access to material that has been digitised. Such processes are anathema to archive historians who like nothing better than to rummage around in the

original papers and transcripts and see earlier versions and formats. But as Christensen argued, there exists a basic misunderstanding within the research community about the processes of preservation and access and that they should not be considered in the same way but in fact as two separate functions undertaken by archives.

So issues pertaining to the reasons for preservation, digitisation and access must be taken into account when accessing moving image content. It is not simply enough to explore online collections but also to consider why they have been created and by whom. In this way archive collections on the internet bear striking similarity to offline collections of curated material. In her consideration of historical method and practice Ludmilla Jordanova notes that:

*While museums satisfy curiosity about the past, they also shape the forms such curiosity is permitted to take. They transmit ideas about the past through a variety of lenses, of which visitors are unlikely to be fully aware: they convey narratives and values as well as insights and information. (2000: 145)*

Of course, the internet is not a museum, but some of the issues Jordanova identifies here are relevant. In a museum, the material and collections are carefully curated and the visitor is taken by the hand and led through the collections so that they get the most from the exhibits. Often a key painting, piece of sculpture, or collection will include information about the artist and subject as well as information about the item itself. In some museums, additional information about the provenance of the item will also be included to provide the visitor with further detail and to enhance and enrich their overall experience. Within online collections, the material will again be presented in a very specific manner and similar choices will have been made relating to what to include in the collection and how to detail about the collection and contributor in the most effective way. Yet these curatorial issues are never straightforward, either in a conventional museum or in an online collection. As Noordegraaf has pointed out, often the choices of what to include in online collections have been made in accordance with criteria not available to the researcher (2010: 7). We simply do not know why the items have been selected for digitisation and inclusion in an online collection and what have been rejected; why has photograph number 14 been included and not any of the surrounding photographs? Is it the best example, is it typical or atypical? Are all the related items missing and is item 14 the only one remaining? These are all valid questions and ones which the user or researcher must bear in mind regardless of whether he or she is confronted with physical paper or broadcast archives or an online database. Issues of omission and absence are crucial in all archive based research. The problem with online research is that it is extremely difficult to see what has been excised from a collection or what was simply not included in the first place.

As shown, issues of access, use and context permeate discussions about using online material. I want to now extrapolate further using the recent EUscreen project as a case study. Like many other projects of its kind, EUscreen is not concerned first and foremost with user engagement or media literacy. However it does serve as an example of how sites which aim to attract and engage general as well as academic users, need to recognise the existence of users who are highly media literate.

## CASE STUDY: EUSCREEN AND EUROPEAN TELEVISION HISTORY

EUscreen is one of a number of projects which offer free audio-visual content to Internet users. This project brings together 20 European television archives to create a searchable database of over 40,000 items to provide the user with a unique and engaging journey through both the history of European television and the history of Europe itself.<sup>1</sup> Like similar projects, the EUscreen database emerges from a consortium of academics, archives and technologists and is funded by an external organisation, in this case, the European Commission as part of the e-Contentplus Programme. As part of this funding the content on EUscreen will also become available through Europeana, the gateway to Europe's vast heritage collections which currently provide access to over 20 million objects from libraries, museums, archives and audiovisual archives.

One of the most important aspects of the EUscreen project was to contextualise the content for users. Detailed metadata accompanies every item to make the collection accessible and usable and this information is provided by those who know the material the best – the archivists themselves. Such information is intended to encourage the user to recognise that the material included is not random but has been carefully selected. This selection process highlights the importance of the archivist who has chosen the material for inclusion. As Luisa Cigognetti has identified, it is these shadowy figures who determine "what is going to be kept, secured and thus remembered in the future" (2001: 36). The more we know about the people and organisation who have contributed the material, the more useful that material then becomes.

EUscreen's focus is television and its valuable content is drawn from countries as diverse as Sweden, Austria, Greece and Ireland and presents food for thought for both the serious researcher and the casual browser. A researcher keen to explore attitudes towards migration within the European Union can access a range of news material which addresses this issue directly but also a range of other programmes including a piece of Belgian musical theatre with immigration as its subject, a heated political debate from Denmark and a thoughtful exploration of the plight of refugees in Sweden. A casual browser keen to find favourite artists or music legends could watch and listen to clips featuring Duke Ellington, Leonard Cohen and Tom Waits as well as performances from Eurovision winners Cliff Richard, Dana and Marie Myriam of France. There are also items which are unabashedly entertaining; animals doing amusing things, circus training from Romania in 1962 which shows parrots and dogs driving a car, footage of Slovenian frogs which change colour in the mating season, as well as a range of still images from popular programmes such as British sitcom *Allo Allo*.

In order to make the collection easy to access and search, all items have been assigned to one of 14 historical topics. The topics are varied and include society and social issues, war and conflict, religion and belief, politics and economics and demonstrate that the site is not simply a resource for European Television scholars, but is also relevant for those interested in economics, politics, history, languages, art and culture. As with all databases,

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the project itself see Barber, 2011.



one of the key issues for users and consequently for the wider project team is how to make the mass of material easily accessible and useful to a range of different users with different needs. One way in which this issue has been addressed is through the detailed metadata schema and the wealth of contextualising information that accompanies every clip. The country of origin, provider, broadcast date, whether the clip is part of a series, when it was made, a brief summary of its contents, what language it is in or if it is mute are all key parts of the metadata schema. Such detailed metadata and careful contextualisation is intended to avoid the 'archival bricolage' of YouTube to create a very different kind of resource and user experience.

One of the biggest draws on the site is the inclusion of material from countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Romania, countries which have a history of state-controlled broadcasting and whose archives possess content only recently digitised and being shown to international audiences for the first time on EUscreen. Yet in order for users to fully understand the nuances of the material, it is important to recognise the different cultural and financial imperatives of production and the involvement of the state in production. It is not simply enough to look at Polish television news items and the way issues of healthcare, economics or social progress are discussed. The involvement of the state and the possible lack of autonomy experienced by the broadcaster TVP at key moments must be fully understood, explored and evaluated. And this is not simply the case for broadcast organisations from countries in the former Soviet-bloc. Austrian broadcaster ORF has drawn attention to the fact that despite starting television broadcasts in 1955, it was only in 1964 that the first Austrian referendum freed the broadcaster from political influence by ending the proportional representation of political parties in the company's management.<sup>2</sup>

To all intents and purposes, much of the content presented online by archives offers very specific and clearly identifiable narratives. For example the narratives which Dublin based broadcaster RTE have chosen to present as part of their curated content deal with civil rights and the outbreak of the Troubles in Ireland in the late 1960s. Such narratives tell us a great deal about the material contained within the archive, but also about the preoccupations of both those who curate the material and those who will view it. Meghan Dougherty and Steven Schneider term such web archiving activity as "a merger of stewardship methods and scholarly methods" (2012: 257) and this is precisely what is taking place on EUscreen when archival and academic practice come together.

So how can a user get the most out of the EUscreen material on a specifically defined topic and recognise the different points of view which inform this material? If a student was composing an essay or working on a project on the fall of the Berlin Wall then visual material showing this event would be both relevant and useful. Yet a student keen to explore the event itself would need to be aware of its historical complexities and consult books and journals to further understand it. The student would need to be aware of the importance of oral history and eyewitness testimony, as well as understanding the crucial

<sup>2</sup> ORF piece on *Critical Studies in Television: Scholarly Studies in Small Screen Fictions* online at <http://www.cstonline.tv/category/featured-archives> from June 2012 (03.08.2012).

role played by television in relaying this event around the world, and its subsequent status as a significant and meaningful *televised* historical occurrence.

A quick search among a conventional university library catalogue throws up some key sources but also underlines some key approaches including Marxist readings and accounts which contextualise the event and link the fall of the Berlin Wall to the Cold War, communism and the intervention of powerful states like the USA. Any account of the fall of the Berlin wall would need to avoid a straightforward narrative and recognise a plethora of sources and material which evaluate and explore the collapse of the wall as a political, social and cultural event. There is much more detail offered in this range of written sources than can be contained within a brief clip. Yet, the visual also has an important part to play. As a significant event of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, television footage of the fall of the Berlin Wall can be found through the most basic internet search. The television footage with its images of jubilant celebration not only captured and communicated the temporal excitement and historical significance of this particular event and flashed it around the world but the event became effective shorthand for the fall of communism and the break-up of the USSR. The fact that it was all captured on television is crucial and subsequent programmes have frequently drawn attention to the televised nature of the event as well as to the event itself.

A student who studied a clip of the event would need to ask some basic questions; why is the event being filmed, who is doing the filming, for what purpose, which organisation, who is it being relayed to, is it live, or is it being commented upon retrospectively? All of this information is relevant and can lead to a further exploration of the moving image content, but is it readily available and can it be trusted? A search for material on "Berlin Wall" on EUscreen offers 60 different items contributed by providers from Belgium, Slovenia, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Britain, Sweden, and the Netherlands as well as Germany, all of which offer a variety of different viewpoints and perspectives. The BBC footage and that provided by Dutch broadcaster Sound and Vision is from the 1960s and focuses on tensions in Berlin and the building of the wall while the Belgian clips feature reporting of the collapse of the wall itself as well as interviews with eye-witnesses. The contemporaneous German material provided by Deutsche Welle is moving and poignant, filled with scenes of celebration and joy, and with a number of retrospective programmes made in subsequent months and years focus on the implications for Germany and looking back on the years of division. The Czech television material is a programme about escapes from East Berlin which, although it draws heavily on older footage, was only broadcast in 2002 and so has a very different intended audience and a very different broadcast purpose from contemporaneous programmes.

This material can help contribute to an understanding of the event itself but it is crucial to recognise that all of the television items shed light on the variety of national perspectives, the involvement of a range of broadcasters and the different audiences being targeted. All of this could be usefully incorporated into an essay drawing on techniques of visual or textual analysis as well as historical critique which explores the variety of the material and the range of different motivations at work within the programmes. The detailed metadata, which is such a fundamental part of EUscreen, and

inclusion of information such as broadcast date and country of production are essential in helping to explore this significant event through television. Yet the material on EUscreen has not only been contextualised for the users: parts of the site features material which has been specifically curated.

## CURATING THE MATERIAL

The EUscreen project enables the researcher to discover a great deal more than simply what exists within the database and the historical collections. Using specially designed tools and drawing on information provided by design workshops and user testing, the project team has developed a set of exhibition tools. Using these tools, each project contributor will curate a selection of their own items into a series of virtual exhibitions to draw attention to key material and to provide further detail and context. These topics range from Sound and Vision's exhibitions on architecture, an introduction to the Catalan language provided by Televisió de Catalunya, French Television history showcased through the extensive Ina collection and a voyage through Hungarian music and dance curated by NAVA.

It is anticipated that these exhibition tools will soon be made available for users of the portal to curate their own exhibitions and playlists, thus providing an improved level of user engagement. These tools are a means for site users to "capture, conserve and interface" with archival objects, a process which Dougherty and Schneider deem to be crucial and one which further engages a broader range of users (2012: 255).

In addition to these independently curated exhibitions which can now be found on the portal, two larger, expertly curated exhibitions have also been added to the site focusing on the selected topics of European Television History and Being European. Both of these exhibitions utilise content from all the different content providers to encourage users to look beyond individual collections and to experience the diversity of the material on the site. These two comparative exhibitions recognise points of similarity and difference while simultaneously offering the user a curated voyage through the EUscreen collection. Expert curation is combined with moving image clips, digitised documents, audio recordings and still images to offer a multi-layered user experience and also to serve as an example of what the site can offer to the teacher and the researcher.<sup>3</sup>

As the curator of Being European, it has been my job to view content assigned to this particular topic and to construct an engaging narrative for site users. This has been a far from straightforward process but has allowed me to become familiar with a great deal of content on the portal and to explore the ways in which this content could be presented. Perhaps the most fascinating part of this process has been the range of issues which has emerged from the content. For example there is a great deal of material in this particular topic which focuses on the European economy, but the footage is far from uniform and includes far more than mere reactions to the Euro. Instead programmes draw attention to

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the CVE development process see Barber, 2012.

the ways in which different national broadcasters address issues of economics and finance and make them accessible to television audiences. Many programmes look beyond their own borders to focus on the economic position of their European neighbours, such as Televisió de Catalunya's report on Italy's industrial boom in the 1980s and a series of programmes from different broadcasters including the BBC which draw attention to the high standards of living and strong domestic economy of Sweden.

Creating this exhibition has also highlighted brand new areas of interest, for example the focus on children, with programmes aimed at children to help them understand the EU, including an introduction to the Euro carefully explained to Slovenian children in a quiz show format, or a young Swedish reporter going to Germany to report on the recent fall of the Berlin Wall. There are also programmes about children, such as a 1970s report about problem children being rehabilitated in Sweden from Irish broadcaster RTE, the success of the children's chess championships in Romania, and the risks of drugs for teenagers as reported by ORF.

All of this material and additional context is offered on the site itself and the exhibitions provide a way for users to explore a range of material which has been expertly curated. The process of creating exhibitions also called attention to limitations in my own media literacy. I had to learn how to use the specifically created tools and how to make the exhibition engaging, appealing and interactive with links to external sites, maps and further information for the user. Throughout this process I also had to undertake further research into significant European events and to contact the providers of the content to ask for clarification on particular issues. As the process of curating these exhibitions developed, it became apparent that despite our best efforts, the portal was not providing enough information on the history of the broadcasters themselves and that more information from the partner archives was needed.

## BEYOND THE PORTAL

In order to address this absence on the site, some of the archives and broadcasters have provided further information on their organisations, offering fascinating insights into their own institutional histories. A series of articles profiling these organisations can be found in the online journal *Critical Studies in Television* which focuses each month on a different EUScreen archive and the treasures held within their vaults.<sup>4</sup> In addition to giving broadcasters an opportunity to present the best of their archive collections to media and television scholars, these articles not only highlight their own digitisation and preservation initiatives, they also illustrate the relationships between these broadcast organisations and larger historical events.

For example Czech Television recounts how during the Velvet Revolution, the radio continued to broadcast from the roof of the building to provide a rallying cry across the airwaves. Belgian broadcaster VRT revealed that a policy of retaining broadcast

<sup>4</sup> View this series of articles on *Critical Studies in Television: Scholarly Studies in Small Screen Fictions* at <http://www.cston-line.tv/category/featured-archives> (11.11.2012).

programmes was established only after the sinking of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* ferry. VRT's news rushes were used in the subsequent investigation into the disaster thus proving the usefulness of archive content. Before this event, each department was responsible for keeping its own content, with no formal policy within the organisation. The National Library of Sweden reveals how Swedish law on the retention of all written (and later visual) content which was originally intended as a form of state censorship now ensures the preservation of the Sweden's literary and cultural heritage. The French *Ina* (*Institut national audiovisuel*) documents the complex history of French broadcasting and its deregulation in the 1980s which led to a plethora of privately owned channels in competition with the public service broadcaster, while Dutch archive Sound and Vision reveals how it is responsible for holding and digitising 90,000 hours of video, 22,000 hours of film, 98,000 hours of audio material and over 2.5 million pictures.

This series of articles reveals the complex relationship between broader social events, governments, broadcasters and their programmes, audiences *and* the medium of television. It also shows that understanding as much as possible about the material and reception of the material leads to increased understanding of the material.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the increasing focus on user engagement, the key to media literacy is still understanding. There are strong imperatives for improving media literacy and encouraging general users as well as students and researchers to effectively engage with what they find online rather than simply using it unquestioningly. In this way, engagement and understanding should perhaps be seen as sharing an objective. But unlike many other online sites, EUscreen's purpose is not to act as a social media space or to encourage users to add their own content but rather to offer a range of content relating to European Television and its history. Instead the creation of the EUscreen archive is motivated by both access and enrichment. It has been created for a specific purpose – to provide access to a range of rare television content – but like many other digital archives - it may come to be used for a range of "additional, possibly unforeseen purposes" (Dougherty and Schneider, 2012: 259).

One of the prime motivations behind EUscreen is the concept of "digitising to make available". Perhaps in the follow up project, EUscreen XL which will be launched in March 2013, users will be encouraged to add their own content, to tag media items, to download and re-use, to create mash-ups using the video content, to link to other sites and to add comments to the material. In an increasingly globalised and mediated world, this kind of activity has become commonplace and as Burgess and Green note, "the near ubiquity of digital technologies means creative practice is necessary for both critical awareness and informed participation in the media" (2009: 71).

Yet such activity raises huge questions about moderation of material, about copyright and ownership and about creative re-use. If all of these things were to be permitted without restriction then the central objective of the EUscreen project – to provide carefully

contextualised material with detailed metadata – could be undermined. Certainly the site itself would provide a very different user experience to the one presently offered.

Despite the contributions made by EUscreen and similar projects, a great deal remains to be done to encourage users to fully engage with and effectively understand online content. It is not enough to foreground the availability of resources for specific user groups: accompanying work needs to be undertaken to help users get the most out of these resources and to study their use of sites like EUscreen and the European Film Gateway. Only with increased understanding of user practices and behaviour can we begin to measure their own levels of media literacy and their understanding of the material they find and use online.

### References

- >Barber, Sarah and Penniston-Bird, Corinna M. (2009) *History Beyond the Text: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- >Barber, Sian (2011) Europe on Screen: the EUscreen Project, *Viewfinder: Moving Image and Sound, Knowledge and Access* 85 (Winter): 14-15.
- >Barber, Sian (2012) A Curated Experience: Comparative Virtual Exhibitions on EUscreen, *Viewfinder: Moving Image and Sound, Knowledge and Access* 87 (Summer): 6-7.
- >Burgess, Jean and Green, Joshua (2009) *YouTube Digital Media and Society Series*. Polity Press: Cambridge.
- >Cigognetti, Luisa (2001) Historians and Television Archives, pp. 36 in Roberts, Graham and Taylor, Philip M. (ed.) *The Historian, Television and Television History*. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- >Dougherty, Meghan and Schneider, Steven M. (2011) Web Historiography and the Emergence of New Archival Forms, pp. 253-262 in Park, David W, Jankowski, Nicholas W. and Jones, Steve (eds) *The Long History of New Media: Technology, Historiography and Contextualising Newness*. New York: Peter Land Publishing.
- >Fickers, Andreas (2012) Towards a New Digital Historicism: Doing History in the Age of Abundance, *Journal of European Television History and Culture* 1 (1) available online at <http://journal.euscreen.eu/index.php/jethc/issue/view/138> (03.07.2012).
- >Godwin, Peter and Parker, Jo (2011) *Information literacy: Beyond Library 2.0*. London: Facet Publishing.
- >Jordanova, Ludmilla (2000) *History in Practice*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- >Noordegraaf, Julia (2010) Who Knows Television: Online Access and the Gatekeepers of Knowledge, *Critical Studies in Television: Scholarly Studies in Small Screen Fictions* 5 (2): 1-19.
- >Ofcom report, 2011 *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes*, accessed from <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy-pubs/> (03.07.2012).
- >Popple, Simon (2011) It's Not Really Our Content: The Moving Image and Media History in the Digital Archive Age, pp. 317-332 in Park, David W, Jankowski, Nicholas W. and Jones, Steve (eds) *The Long History of New Media: Technology, Historiography and Contextualising Newness*. New York: Peter Land Publishing.
- >Robertson, Craig (2011) Introduction: Thinking about Archives, Writing about History, pp 1-4 in Robertson, Craig (ed.) *Media, History and the Archive*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- >Scannell, Paddy (2011) Television and History: Questioning the Archive, pp. 42-53 in Robertson, Craig (ed.) *Media, History and the Archive*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- >Spigel, Lynn (2011) Housing Television: Architecture of the Archive pp. 56-71 in Robertson, Craig (ed.) *Media, History and the Archive*. Abingdon: Routledge.

# NEDOVOLJNO PRIDAVANJE VAŽNOSTI AUDIO-VIZUALNOM SADRŽAJU NA INTERNETU: EUROPSKA INICIJATIVA, MEDIJSKA PISMENOST I KORISNIK

Sian Barber

**SAŽETAK** Nedavne rasprave o medijskoj pismenosti i internetu istaknule su važnost aktivnog uključivanja korisnika i interakcije. Više nije dovoljno samo pristupiti sadržaju na internetu, već je potrebno komentirati sadržaj te ga ponovno upotrijebiti. Ipak, postavlja se sljedeće pitanje: kako se ta nova očekivanja od korisnika uklapaju u digitalne inicijative koje povećavaju pristup audio-vizualnom sadržaju s obzirom na to da su digitalne inicijative kao prioritete postavile očuvanje arhiva i mogućnost pristupa online arhivama te istraživanje arhiva prije nego li aktivno uključivanje korisnika? Ovaj rad proučava teme koje se tiču medijske pismenosti u odnosu na audio-vizualni sadržaj. Razmatra se kako se tim temama danas pristupa te se pritom fokusira na eksponiranu europsku inicijativu EUscreen. EUscreen okuplja arhive 20 europskih televizija u jednu bazu podataka putem koje se može pretraživati preko 40.000 digitalnih stavki. Ipak, ograničenja u kreativnom korištenju sadržaja i autorska prava sprečavaju korisnike da ponovno koriste sadržaj koji nađu na internetskoj stranici. Umjesto toga EUscreen nudi pristup i detaljnu kontekstualizaciju svojih kolekcija sadržaja. No ako u online okruženju potreba za sredstvima počiva na uključivanju korisnika, a ne više samo na pristupu sadržaju, što zapravo EUscreen i slične internetske stranice nude različitim korisnicima?

## KLJUČNE RIJEČI

ARHIVA, AUDIO-VIZUALNA SREDSTVA, KULTURNO NASLIJEĐE, EUROPSKA TELEVIZIJA, MEDIJSKA PISMENOST

Bilješka o autorici \_\_\_\_\_

**Sian Barber** :: Royal Holloway, Sveučilište u Londonu, Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo ::  
Sian.barber@rhul.ac.uk